

Message Text

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ORIGIN ARA-10

INFO OCT-01 ISO-00 PM-03 NSC-05 SP-02 SS-15 CIAE-00

DODE-00 INR-07 NSAE-00 PA-01 USIA-06 PRS-01 AID-05

PC-01 IO-10 /067 R

DRAFTED BY USOAS:TETAYLOR/ATP

APPROVED BY ARA - WILLIAM G. BOWDLER

USOAS:WSMAILLIARD (DRAFT)

USOAS:FMCNEIL

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R 202323Z MAR 75

FM SECSTATE WASHDC

TO ALL AMERICAN REPUBLIC DIPLOMATIC POSTS

XMT AMEMBASSY GEORGETOWN

AMEMBASSY NASSAU

C O N F I D E N T I A L STATE 063956

E.O. 11652: GDS

TAGS: OAS, PFOR

SUBJECT: ELECTION OF OAS SECRETARY GENERAL

REFERENCE: STATE 19801

1. FYI: THE SECRETARY GENERAL RACE CONTINUES UNSETTLED. DESPITE A FIRST BALLOT COMMITMENT TO PARAGUAYAN FOREIGN MINISTER SAPENA PASTOR, ARGENTINA HAS COME VERY CLOSE TO ANNOUNCING THAT ITS AMBASSADOR TO THE U.S, ORFILA, WILL BE A CANDIDATE. MOST OF THE AIR WENT OUT OF THE TRIAL BALLOON OF VENEZUELAN AMBASSADOR TO THE U.S., BURELLI-RIVAS, WHEN THE VENEZUELAN GOVERNMENT INDICATED IT WOULD NOT OFFICIALLY PUT HIM FORWARD. AND TO DATE THE QTE INFORMAL UNQTE CANDIDACY OF PERU'S GARCIA BEDOYA HAS BEEN A LEAD BALLOON, ALTHOUGH PRESS REPORTS INDICATE PERU STILL PLANS TO SPONSOR IT.

2. THUS, THE OFFICIAL FIELD IS STILL LIMITED TO TWO CANDIDATES, SAPENA PASTOR AND DOMINICAN FOREIGN MINISTER GOMEZ

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BERGES, NEITHER OF WHOM SEEM ABLE TO COMMAND A MAJORITY

AT THIS JUNCTURE. AN OFFICIALIZATION OF GARCIA BEDOYA'S CANDIDACY WILL NOT CHANGE THE PICTURE DRASTICALLY. THERE IS WIDELY VOICED HOPE THAT ANOTHER CANDIDATE MIGHT APPEAR WHO COULD COMMAND SOMETHING APPROACHING A CONSENSUS. ORFILA MIGHT BE THE MAN, BUT HIS SITUATION IS COMPLICATED BY ARGENTINA'S FIRST BALLOT COMMITMENT, BRAZIL'S APPARENT OPPOSITION AND THE COMPLEX PROCEDURES FOR NOMINATIONS AFTER

THE FIRST BALLOT. AT WRITING IT IS STILL VERY MUCH AN OPEN RACE. IN THE CIRCUMSTANCES THE U.S. REMAINS UNCOMMITTED AND MINDFUL OF AVOIDING A REPETITION OF PAST ERRORS THAT LED TO BITTER ACCUSATIONS OF OUR HAVING PRESSED GALO PLAZA'S ELECTION.

3. THE FOLLOWING IS A BREAKDOWN OF COUNTRY POSITIONS AS WE UNDERSTAND THEM:

ARGENTINA: WILL SUPPORT SAPENA PASTOR ONLY ON FIRST ROUND. IF SAPENA DROPS OUT, WILL PUT ORFILA IN THE FIELD. IF SAPENA STAYS IN AFTER THE FIRST BALLOT, WILL PROPOSE ORFILA AT FIRST OPPORTUNITY PERMITTED BY RULES.

BARBADOS: UNCOMMITTED, AS FAR AS WE KNOW, THOUGH GOMEZ BERGES CLAIMS COMMITMENT.

BOLIVIA: COMMITTED TO SAPENA.

BRAZIL: COMMITTED TO SAPENA. SEEMS TO BE RESISTING STRONGLY AN ORFILA CANDIDACY AND MAY BE ENCOURAGING SAPENA TO STAY IN TO BLOCK ORFILA.

CHILE: COMMITTED TO SAPENA, BUT WOULD SUPPORT ORFILA AFTER FIRST BALLOT OR IF SAPENA DROPS OUT.

COSTA RICA: HELPED BRING GOMEZ INTO RACE IN ORDER TO STOP SAPENA. NOW IS IN EMBARRASSING POSITION OF HAVING TO SUPPORT GOMEZ, THOUGH COSTA RICA'S PREFERRED CANDIDATE, ORFILA, IS NOW EDGING INTO THE RACE.

COLOMBIA: UNCOMMITTED. COULD PROPOSE A CANDIDATE OF ITS CONFIDENTIAL

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OWN (E.G. PASTRANA).

DOMINICAN REPUBLIC: GOMEZ.

ECUADOR: PERU CLAIMS ECUADOR WOULD SUPPORT GARCIA BEDOYA IF HE IS CANDIDATE. UNCOMMITTED.

EL SALVADOR: HAS BEEN COUNTED A FIRM VOTE FOR SAPENA,

BUT REPORTEDLY COULD SLIP TO GOMEZ OR ANOTHER CANDIDATE.
WE COUNT AS PROBABLE FOR SAPENA.

GUATEMALA: PLEDGED TO SAPENA, REPORTEDLY IN RETURN FOR
SUPPORT FOR GUATEMALAN CANDIDATE FOR ASSISTANT SECGEN.

HAITI: BOTH SAPENA AND GOMEZ HAVE CLAIMED HAITI AS FIRMLY
IN THEIR CAMP. PERHAPS UNCOMMITTED.

HONDURAS: GOMEZ.

JAMAICA: UNCOMMITTED, BUT GOMEZ IS A CARIBBEAN, WHICH
GIVES HIM A LEG UP.

MEXICO: COMMITTED TO GOMEZ, BUT LIKE COSTA RICA WOULD
PREFER TO BE ABLE TO SUPPORT SOMEONE ELSE. SAPENA IS
ANATHEMA.

NICARAGUA: COMMITTED TO SAPENA IF NO CENTRAL AMERICAN
CANDIDATE.

PANAMA: PLUMPING FOR ORFILA.

PARAGUAY: SAPENA.

PERU: IF GARCIA'S CANDIDACY IS ULTIMATELY DROPPED, UN-
LIKELY TO SUPPORT GOMEZ. SAPENA ANATHEMA.

TRINIDAD: COMMITTED TO GOMEZ.

URUGUAY: COMMITTED TO SAPENA.

VENEZUELA: VENEZUELAN OFFICIALS MADE PUBLIC STATEMENTS
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SUPPORTING GOMEZ IN MAY 1974, AND GOMEZ CLAIMS A WRITTEN
COMMITMENT. BUT VENEZUELA HAS SINCE MADE IT CLEAR IT
DOES NOT CONSIDER ITSELF COMMITTED.

4. IF THIS COUNT IS ACCURATE, SAPENA HAS EIGHT VOTES,
PLUS ONE PROBABLE; GOMEZ HAS FIVE, WITH A FEW LEANERS.
IT TAKES 12 TO ELECT. THERE HAVE BEEN RUMORS SAPENA MIGHT
WITHDRAW. IF HE SHOULD, SEVERAL THINGS COULD HAPPEN:
(A) A RUSH TO ORFILA, PERHAPS LEADING TO GOMEZ' WITHDRAWAL
AND AN EASY ORFILA VICTORY, (B) A TRIAL BALLOON FOR YET
ANOTHER CANDIDATE WHO MIGHT PICK UP STEAM OR WHO MIGHT
FURTHER COMPLICATE MATTERS, (C) AN ORFILA-GOMEZ HORSE RACE.
GOMEZ HAS A LIGHTWEIGHT REPUTATION BUT GEOGRAPHY HELPS HIM.
IF HE COULD GET THE SUPPORT OF THE FIVE ISLAND COUNTRIES,
THE FIVE CENTRAL AMERICANS (EXCLUDING PANAMA), MEXICO AND

VENEZUELA OR BRAZIL, HE WOULD WIN.END FYI.

5. ACTION REQUESTED: AS APPROPRIATE OPPORTUNITY ARISES, WOULD APPRECIATE EMBASSIES RAISING THIS MATTER INFORMALLY. WE ARE PARTICULARLY INTERESTED IN 1) WHETHER GOVERNMENTS SUCH AS PERU AND COLOMBIA ARE STILL CONSIDERING FIELDING CANDIDATES AND 2) WHAT GOVERNMENTS WOULD DO IN AN ORFILA-GOMEZ TWO-WAY RACE. THE LATTER QUESTION REQUIRES PARTICULAR CARE, SINCE WE DO NOT WANT TO APPEAR TO BE TAKING FOR GRANTED SAPENA'S WITHDRAWAL. FOR ALL WE KNOW, HE MAY

STAY IN AND YOU SHOULD NOT LEAVE THE IMPRESSION THAT U.S. THINKS HE WILL WITHDRAW. PROBABLY THE BEST TACK IS TO REFER TO PUBLISHED RUMORS AND ASK WHAT THEY WOULD DO IF HE DID WITHDRAW.

7. WE WOULD ALSO APPRECIATE ANY COMMENTS ON LIST OF COUNTRY ATTITUDES ABOVE. INGERSOLL

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Message Attributes

Automatic Decaptioning: X
Capture Date: 01 JAN 1994
Channel Indicators: n/a
Current Classification: UNCLASSIFIED
Concepts: SECRETARY GENERAL, ELECTION FORECASTS, REGIONAL ORGANIZATIONS
Control Number: n/a
Copy: SINGLE
Draft Date: 20 MAR 1975
Decaption Date: 01 JAN 1960
Decaption Note:
Disposition Action: RELEASED
Disposition Approved on Date:
Disposition Authority: GolinoFR
Disposition Case Number: n/a
Disposition Comment: 25 YEAR REVIEW
Disposition Date: 28 MAY 2004
Disposition Event:
Disposition History: n/a
Disposition Reason:
Disposition Remarks:
Document Number: 1975STATE063956
Document Source: CORE
Document Unique ID: 00
Drafter: TETAYLOR/ATP
Enclosure: n/a
Executive Order: GS
Errors: N/A
Film Number: D750099-0571
From: STATE
Handling Restrictions: n/a
Image Path:
ISecure: 1
Legacy Key: link1975/newtext/t19750330/aaaabayq.tel
Line Count: 187
Locator: TEXT ON-LINE, ON MICROFILM
Office: ORIGIN ARA
Original Classification: CONFIDENTIAL
Original Handling Restrictions: n/a
Original Previous Classification: n/a
Original Previous Handling Restrictions: n/a
Page Count: 4
Previous Channel Indicators: n/a
Previous Classification: CONFIDENTIAL
Previous Handling Restrictions: n/a
Reference: 75 STATE 19801
Review Action: RELEASED, APPROVED
Review Authority: GolinoFR
Review Comment: n/a
Review Content Flags:
Review Date: 03 SEP 2003
Review Event:
Review Exemptions: n/a
Review History: RELEASED <03 SEP 2003 by ElyME>; APPROVED <18 DEC 2003 by johnsorg>; APPROVED <18 DEC 2003 by GolinoFR>
Review Markings:

Margaret P. Grafeld
Declassified/Released
US Department of State
EO Systematic Review
05 JUL 2006

Review Media Identifier:
Review Referrals: n/a
Review Release Date: n/a
Review Release Event: n/a
Review Transfer Date:
Review Withdrawn Fields: n/a
Secure: OPEN
Status: NATIVE
Subject: ELECTION OF OAS SECRETARY GENERAL
TAGS: PFOR, OAS
To: ALL POSTS NASSAU
Type: TE
Markings: Margaret P. Grafeld Declassified/Released US Department of State EO Systematic Review 05 JUL 2006